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AUTHOR Terdal, Marjorie; Brown, Kimberley
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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that professional preparation programs for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers can help teachers become better cultural observers by drawing on their prior experiences in developing perceptions about their own culture and the classroom culture. A theoretical framework and its application in one ESL teacher education program are described. The theoretical framework is based on the work of cognitive anthropologists, such as Goodenough. The tasks in pre-service ESL teacher training are organized sequentially to help future teachers move from reflection on what has shaped their own world view to designing activities that incorporate a culture studies approach for language classroom use. A three-course methods sequence and a course in culture learning in the language classroom are described, and their role in the larger training program is explained. The structure and chronology of particular assignments, and the way in which they facilitate student transition to the professional role of language educator, are discussed. (MSE)

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FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURE LEARNING IN ESL TEACHER EDUCATION

Marjorie Terdal, Portland State University

Kimberley Brown, Portland State University

Abstract

Professional preparation programs for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers can help teachers become better culture observers by drawing on participants' prior experiences in developing perceptions about their own culture and about the culture of the classroom. This paper outlines a theoretical framework and describes specific classroom procedures and tasks used in an ESL teacher education program.

The theoretical framework is based on the work of cognitive anthropologists, such as Goodenough, who has proposed the concept of propriospect, the unique version of culture each of us creates out of individual experience. The tasks in the pre-service TESL program are organized sequentially to help future teachers move from reflection on what has shaped their own world view of language learning and teaching to designing activities that incorporate a culture studies approach for use in the language classroom.

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profession in which professional values, knowledge, and practice are inextricably linked"(p. 17).

Definition of terms

In order for readers to understand the culture learning process our program participants work through, it is necessary to explain how we are using the following terms.

Professions are often characterized by defined entrance criteria. There are qualifying exams, codes of ethics, standards, and professional meetings and publications. Wallace (1991) notes that

> any occupation aspiring to the title of 'profession' will claim at least some of these qualities: a basis of scientific knowledge; a period of rigorous study which is formally assessed; a sense of public service; high standards of professional conduct; and the ability to perform some specified demanding and socially useful tasks in a demonstrably competent manner. (p. 5)

Within the TESOL profession, professional standards have evolved over the past two and a half decades. Among the latest yardsticks have been the number of members, the number of institutions that have affirmed the Core Standard, and the number of programs that have completed the Self-Study process.

FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURE LEARNING

IN ESL TEACHER EDUCATION

Anthropologists of education have long explored the function of schooling in the inculcation of cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes. In this paper we will describe how one Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) preparatory program helps its participants step into the culture of professional language educators.

The paper begins with a definition of several terms that are integral to our conceptualization of the goals and objectives of the program. Next is an overview of the three-course Methods sequence and the Culture Learning in the Language Classroom course, and an explanation of how these elements fit within the larger TESOL program framework. We will then review the structure and chronology of particular assignments and how they facilitate student transition to the professional role of language educators.

Ideas shaping the construction of the curriculum are solidly grounded in our commitment to allowing participants in both the TESOL masters degree and certificate programs to engage in a process of exploration of their own educational beliefs and values as well as language education theory and methodology. This is consistent with Carr's (1985) emphasis on teaching as "a reflective

Individuals who claim membership in a particular profession have met the standards and criteria of the profession and take pride in the craft of what they do. They invest in their growth in the profession--financially and emotionally. They are grounded in the theory of the profession and can make explicit the expectations of their role.

Professional language educators are individuals who teach speakers of one or more languages another language and who ascribe to tenets of ethical behavior and standards reflected in the mission statements of organizations such as TESOL, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, IATEFL: International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, and SIETAR: Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research.

Definitions of culture are abundant in language teaching literature. In the definitions that follow, what is critical is that these terms apply equally well to the culture of professional language educators. Hoopes and Pusch (1979) define culture as:

> the sum total of ways of living; including values, beliefs, aesthetic standards, linguistic expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and styles of communication which a group of people has developed to assure its survival in a particular physical and human environment. (p. 3)

Goodenough (1981, p. 62) asserts that culture "consists of standards for deciding what is, ... what can be, ... how one feels about it, ... what to do about it, and ...how to go about it." His definition includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of culture. Goodenough developed the concept of propriospect to describe one's private, subjective view of the world as distinguished from society's culture pool, defined as "the sum of all of the propriospects of all of the society's members" Goodenough (1971, p. 42).

Within the field of TESOL, professional language educators belong to a culture pool and also possess their own propriospects, that is, their general cultural knowledge and their particular beliefs about language learning and teaching.

Cultural self-awareness involves bringing into conscious awareness the standards, beliefs, and values of both the individual and the professional language education culture as a whole. Hoopes (1979) declares that

> as long as our way of perceiving the world--on which our communication styles and behavior patterns are based--is 'out of awareness', it is not accessible to being deliberately changed, managed, understood or influenced. (p. 16)

Given our assumption that there is a culture of professional

language educators with observable rule-governed patterns of behavior, how does someone who aspires to be part of that culture learn the rules? In addition, how does that person bring into conscious awareness the aspects of his or her own propriospect as a language teacher and how that will affect who he or she will be in the classroom? Part of this culture learning process involves observing what people do and say, making connections, and reformulating our propriospects out of direct experience (Wolcott, 1991).

Overview of TESOL program

The broad goal of the TESOL program described here is to help program participants think of themselves as professionals when they leave the program. As professionals, we expect them:

(1) to be theoretically grounded
(2) to be culturally self aware, reflective practictioners
(3) to be self-directed
(4) to help shape educational policy
(5) to improve classroom practice through research

Within the TESOL program, housed in the department of Applied Linguistics, participants in both the masters degree and certificate programs take courses in theoretical and applied linguistics, literature, cultural studies, and TESOL methodology. This paper focuses only on the required three-course TESOL Methods

sequence and a recommended Culture Learning in the Language Classroom course.

Reflective activities are an important component of the program. The program participants in the first of the three Methods courses begin to reflect upon their early experiences with professional language educators and to look at the impact these teachers and the participants' own language learning experiences have had on the development of their propriospect vis-a-vis teaching. The class works as a whole to gather data on the culture pool of language educators even while individuals work to articulate their own criteria for what it means to be a professional language educator.

Incorporating reflective activities into the program helps teachers to become self-directed and to participate in making educational policies. Bartlett (1990) advocates use of reflective inquiry as a means of improving classroom practice. He sees reflection as involving both "the relationship between an individual's thought and action and the relationship between an individual teacher and his or her membership in a larger collective called society" (pp. 204, 205). The process of becoming a reflective teacher involves answering questions such as: Why did I want to become a second language teacher? What do I do as a teacher? What is the meaning of my teaching? How have my present views of teaching emerged? Such questions are the basis for shared

discussion and writing assignments in our Methods sequence.

Within the structure of our program, individuals are encouraged not only to develop expertise in dealing with issues that relate to the micro-level of their classrooms, e.g., experimenting with techniques and designing curriculum, but also to explore the broader social and cultural structures that determine the parameters of their teaching lives. Familiarity with language planning and policy on both a local and an international level is included as a program requirement.

During the first quarter students analyze reasons for choosing TESOL and reflect on previous language learning experiences. They begin to see themselves as language planners and executors of language education policies. They develop observational and assessment skills with respect to the language populations they hope to serve. They also become acquainted with current methods and approaches to language instruction. In the second quarter students focus on theoretical and practical issues related to the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. In the third quarter they focus on assessment issues, creation of appropriate materials for various student populations, and marketing themselves as professionals. Also they learn what it means to be a gatekeeper between cultures and develop cross-cultural analytic skills.

Learning Activities

I	II	III
SILL Language Learning Narrative Academic Cultural Life History Methods Demo	Ideas That Work Micro-Teaching Poster Session Accent Inventory/ Miscue Analysis	Academic Cultural Life History Revisited Philosophy of Education Resume and Cover Letter Research Paper, Oral Presentation

Dialogue Journals

Practice Component – Observing, Practice Teaching and Tutoring

Culture Learning Class

Mini Ethnography

Culture Teaching Project

When students take the class called "Culture Learning in the Language Classroom", they start to look outward at other cultures and draw on the same observational and reflective skills developed in the Methods classes. The experience of looking at their own values, beliefs, and perceptions and those of the language teaching profession has prepared them to look at those of language learners from other cultures.

Structure of classroom activities

[include figure showing box diagrams of tasks]

Figure 1 shows the structure of activities assigned in the Methods and Culture Learning classes.

Methods I

Language learning strategies--New TESOL students begin by taking Rebecca Oxford's (1990) SILL (Strategies Inventory Language Learning) and then share the results in small groups in class. The purpose of this assignment is twofold: to help them become aware of their own language learning strategies and to recognize the variety of strategies used by other language learners. In naming these various strategies, students become aware of what works for them, think about other strategies that they might not have considered before, and become more flexible in using various strategies in their teaching. Some begin to articulate what bothers them about particular strategies.

Language learning narrative--Students in the first term next write a 3-5 page paper describing a language learning experience, either positive or negative. They use present tense to describe the events and the sights, sounds, and even smells of a particular language classroom in which they were once a student. The purpose of this assignment is to show students that they can reconstruct a prior experience in rich detail and to prepare them for classroom observations. Another purpose is to help them realize that they have retained vivid memories of their language learning experiences, memories that color their present perceptions of how language should or should not be taught.

Students who choose a negative learning experience often describe classrooms as windowless, overheated, crowded, devoid of decoration, and filled with distracting sounds. They describe their teachers as glaring, intimidating, unorganized. Those who choose a positive experience more often recall their classrooms as being warm, inviting, and comfortable and their teachers as having a warm smile, speaking calmly, and inserting humor into the lesson. They refer often to affective considerations, writing about the enthusiasm, support, praise, and comfort they received from their peers or the teacher. Others describe themselves as afraid, humiliated, tense, or tired. The teacher is often identified as the one who inspired such feelings. Others refer to specific language learning strategies, such as taking notes, consulting a dictionary, copying tapes, and practicing for hours.

Academic cultural life history--Students in the first term also write a biographical sketch, focusing on marker events that led to their decision to become a language educator. The purpose of this assignment is to help them think about their reasons for choosing to become a language teacher and about the events that have shaped their beliefs about what teaching means. This assignment goes beyond description and requires students to analyze why they have made particular choices and to synthesize by drawing events together into a narrative.

Many students write about the influence of family members or of a particular teacher. Others choose as a marker event their own experiences with teaching, from helping a friend with Algebra in the eighth grade, to tutoring refugees, to serving in the Peace Corps. Intercultural experiences are a marker event for many students, who have hosted exchange students from other countries or been an exchange student themselves. Every TESOL class that we have taught has included at least one student in a cross-cultural marriage, who experiences on a daily basis the need for intercultural communication. Many of the students in our classes are older and reflect on reasons for their mid-life career change.

Methods demonstrations--Working in small groups, students examine the theories behind various methods used in language teaching (for example, Audiolingual Method, Silent Way, Total Physical Response) and common techniques for one particular method. In some classes

they then demonstrate the method to the class as a whole and explain its rationale. In other classes one member of each group then explains and demonstrates the method to a small group of peers, in a jigsaw type activity. The purpose of this assignment is to provide experience in cooperative learning as well as to give the class an overview of these methods. After all the methods have been demonstrated, students write an evaluation of their roles in the group task and a discussion of techniques from each method that they might use in their own teaching. This assignment provides practice in evaluative thinking as well as a way to synthesize information about the various methods.

METHODS II

Collection and demonstration of ideas that work--In the second term of the Methodology sequence, students carry out a variety of activities allowing them to apply the ideas they have been reading about. They begin a collection of techniques for future use; they do a demonstration lesson for peers, who evaluate the lesson; and they participate in a poster session in which each student prepares a visual display and handout of one idea that works.

Research project: Accent inventory/ miscue analysis/ oral interview--During the second term each student also carries out a small research project requiring the collection and analysis of natural language data. Some students choose to do an accent inventory or oral interview, examining speech of a language

learner, while others do a miscue analysis, looking at reading strategies. They write a short paper describing the procedure followed, the results obtained, and any problems experienced or limitations of the study. Besides providing hands-on practice with conducting research this task encourages students to see themselves as researchers.

METHODS III

Academic cultural life history revisited and philosophy of education--In the third term students revise their academic cultural life history and write about their philosophy of education. Because job interviewers sometimes ask for such a philosophy, this helps the students prepare themselves to respond to such questions. They make explicit what they believe about the nature of language and the nature of language learning and the implications of that philosophy for classroom instruction.

Resume and cover letter--As they near completion of the TESOL program, students survey the ESL/EFL job market and consider their qualifications as a language educator. They prepare a resume and write a cover letter.

Research paper and oral presentation--In the third term graduate students write a library research paper, exploring in depth a topic of particular interest to them while certificate students prepare an annotated bibliography. The graduate reports are presented

orally in a mini-conference session, with 20 minute presentations, handouts, bibliography, and evaluations by the audience. Students have explored such topics as cooperative learning in ESL, acquisition hierarchy of linguistic universals, use of poetry in adult ESL, and bilingual education. Many graduate students use this research paper as a preliminary investigation for subsequent thesis research.

ALL THREE TERMS

Dialogue journal--Throughout the three-term Methods sequence, students keep a journal in which they record their reactions to any of the activities in the class and their responses to required readings. As teachers, we collect those journals several times throughout the term, respond to questions or ask questions of our own, and then write our own journal to the class as a whole. The journal is intended to be both descriptive and thoughtfully analytical. Because it is impossible to interact individually with every student in every class, the journal provides a means for us to carry on a conversation with each student. Students write about their personal lives as students and as teachers, their beliefs about teaching, events inside and outside the classroom that they think influence their teaching, and their views about language learning and teaching.

Practice component--During the three terms of our TESOL Methodology sequence, students are required to observe in ESL classes, tutor, and then practice teach, for a total of 70 plus hours. They are responsible for filling out reports on each observation, keeping records of their tutoring, making lesson plans, and evaluating those lessons. They also arrange to have themselves videotaped while teaching and select a segment of that videotape for evaluation with a small group of peers. At the end of each term, they write a practice report documenting how they spent their time, analyzing what they learned from the experience, and evaluating their own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. This assignment provides an opportunity to synthesize what they have observed and experienced through the practice component and to reflect on their changing perception of themselves as language educators.

Culture Learning Class

Ethnographic interview project--Students in the Culture Learning class select an informant from a cultural group with which they are not familiar and carry out a series of interviews, culminating in a 15 to 20-page ethnographic interview project. This assignment provides for students an opportunity to explore cultural differences and similarities in values, beliefs, and perceptions. They are expected to describe in rich detail, look for cultural themes, and avoid evaluating. As they discover what system of rules and mores governs their informant's perception of schooling and language learning, they gain a greater understanding of what

types of culture conflicts could arise in the langauge classroom.

Culture teaching project--Students in the Culture Learning class work together in small groups to plan a training session to teach some aspect of intercultural communication skills to a selected group of students. Students have planned workshops in crosscultural communication for managers of a local company which employs many limited English speaking workers, a set of materials for multicultural education for high school students, and culture specific training for teachers going to specific countries. As part of the project they develop objectives for the learners, select and sequence activities, create or adapt materials, and demonstrate one part of the workshop to the class.

Summary

We believe language education programs should allow students to draw upon the past as they participate in an experiential program that continuously asks them to link theory and practice. They need to think about the notion of culture learning not only in terms of how they will teach about American culture in their classrooms or help their learners be better culture learners, but also they have to be able to interpret their professional lives through the lenses of the professional culture. By helping our program participants to use the lenses of cultural observation, we hope they will willingly become members of the culture of

professional language educators. This meets the two aims of Wallace's (1991, p. 166) reflective approach to teacher education: "to empower teachers to manage their own professional development and to enable teachers to be more effective partners in innovation."

When students leave our program they can link their own personal values and attitudes toward language education with the courses they have taken and the more than seventy hours of field-based observation, tutoring, and practice teaching. When they develop lessons, they are aware of a need to design lessons that appeal to a range of individual learning styles. They are able to revise what they do based on the outcomes they observe. They see themselves as professionals and have an appreciation for their own particular gifts as they step into the culture of professional language educators.

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